

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 201334Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8298
INFO AMEMBASSY LAPAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 3414

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, EC
SUBJECT: RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA CAMPAIGN OFF TO A SHAKY START

REF: QUTIO 3108;

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE ARAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA KICKED OFF HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN MAY 17 WITH A NATIONALLY TELEVISED SPEECH. HUERTA ENJOYS SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL SUPPORT, IS BACKED BY A LOOSE COALITION OF BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE PARTIES AND IS ATTEMPTING TO PROJECT A BRAOD RATHER THAN A PARTISAN IMAGE. HE IS, HOWEVER, MAKING A LATE START AND MUST OVERCOME SERIOUS DIVISIONS IN HIS PARTY AND POOR INITIAL SHOWINGS IN THE POLLS. END SUMMARY.

2. RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA, THE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE, FORMALLY LAUNCHED HIS CAMPAIGN THE EVENING OF MAY 17 WITH A LONG ADDRESS BROADCAST OVER A NATIONAL TELEVISION NETWORK. EVIDENCING STRONG FINANCING BACKING, THE PRESENTATION WAS CARRIED SIMULTANEOUSLY ON ONE GUAYAQUIL CHANNEL AND ALL THREE QUTIO CHANNELS. HUERTA SAID THAT HE WAS ENTERING THE PRESIDENTIAL LISTS OUT OF A PATRIOTIC
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MOTIVE AND OFFERED A MODERATELY PROGRESSIVE PLAN OF GOVERNMENT. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS HIS OWN MAN AND THAT HE NEVER HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH ANY DICTATORIAL GOVERNMENT.

3. IN A CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE AND POLCOUNS IN GUAYAQUIL MAY 19, HUERTA SAID THAT HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS GETTING

A LATE START INTO THE CAMPAIGN AND HAD THEREFORE CHOSEN THE STRATEGY OF FREQUENT USE OF TELEVISION AND OF CONCENTRATING ON MASS RALLIES IN THE COUNTRY'S PRINCIPAL POPULATION CENTERS.

4. PERHAPS BECAUSE OF LACK OF TIME, HUERTA HAS ALSO APPARENTLY DECIDED TO GAMBLE WINNING ON HIS OWN IMAGE RATHER THAN BASING HIS CAMPAIGN ON THE LIBERAL PARTY ORGANIZATION. ASIDE FROM HIS OWN PARTY, HIS CANDIDACY IS SUPPORTED BY A GROUP OF 12 OTHER SMALL PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS CALLED THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC UNITY FRONT (FUDN). THE MOST SIGNIFICANT GROUPS ARE THE NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PNR) OF CARLOS JULIO AROSEMENA AND THE SOCIALISTS. ALTHOUGH THE PHRASE "CENTER-LEFT" COALITION IS BANDIED ABOUT LOOSLY, HUERTA IS ALSO SUPPORTED IN THE GROUPING BY SUCH RIGHTIST GROUPS AS THE FRENTE PONCISTA AND THE VELASQUISTA REPUBLICAN UNION. THE USE OF THIS FRONT ALLOWS HIM TO COMPETE AS A BROAD UNITY CANDIDATE, SOMEWHAT LIKE THE CASE OF SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN WHO HAS THE MULTI-PARTY NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONALIST FRONT (FNC) BEHIND HIM.

5. THIS TACTIC HAS SOME LIBERAL PARTY LOYALISTS ON EDGE. THEY PERCEIVE SUCH A CAMPAIGN AS WEAKENING THEIR PARTY, THE ONLY REALLY SIGNIFICANT ELECTORAL FORCE IN THE FUDN. HUERTA HAS ALREADY RUN INTO SERIOUS TROUBLE WHEN HE AGREED

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WITH CARLOS JULIO AROSEMENA TO SUPPORT TO THE PNR CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR OF GUAYAQUIL. THE GUAYAQUIL LIBERALS HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED THEIR CANDIDATE, THE HEAD OF THEIR PARTY'S GUAYAQUIL DIRECTORATE, AND, REFUSED TO GO ALONG WITH THE DEAL. HUERTA RENDON'S RESPONSE HAS BEEN AN ATTEMPT TO FIRE THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTORATE (A PANCHO HUERTA ORGANIZATION) EN MASSE AND INSTALL A MORE TRACTABLE BODY. THIS HAS FURTHER FANNED THE FIRES OF DISCONTENT IN LIBERAL RANKS.

6. THE LIBERALS REMAIN DIVIDED BETWEEN THE CAMPS OF THEIR CANDIDATE AND HIS NEPHEW, FORMER CANDIDATE FRANCISCO (PANCHO) HUERTA. THE RAUL CLEMENTE FORCES MANAGED TO POSTPONE A NATIONAL CONVENTION IN THE FEAR THAT THE YOUNGER HUERTA CONTINUES TO CONTROL THE PARTY ORGANIZATION AND THAT HE MIGHT DO SOMETHING IN THE CONVENTION TO DAMAGE HIS UNCLE'S CHANCES. TO EMPHASIZE THE REMAINING DIVISION, JUAN CARLOS GUZMAN, THE LEADER OF THE PARTY'S YOUT WING, JUST ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTORATE. IN HIS DEPARTURE STATEMENT HE TOOK A SWIPE AT RAUL CLEMENTE, IMPLYING THAT HE CONSPIRED TO GET HIS NEPHEW'S CANDIDACY DISQUALIFIED SO

THAT HE COULD STEP IN.

7. THE LIBERALS FACE ANOTHER POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEM. PANCHO HUERTA TOLD POLCOUNS MAY 19 THAT HE HAD LEARNED THAT LIBERAL VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE ARSENIO VIVANCO HAD, SOME YEARS AGO, PAID A FINE FOR THE FALSIFICATION OF IMPORT DOCUMENTS ON SOME MERCHANDISE HE WAS IMPORTING FOR RESALE. HE SAID THAT HE HAD GONE TO THE RAUL CLEMENTE CAMP WITH THIS INFORMATION IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID A POTENTIAL PROBLEM, BUT THAT THE INFORMATION WAS DISMISSED, BECAUSE IT WAS TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. THAT ATTITUDE SURPRISED HIM; ALTHOUGH VIVANCO'S INFRACTION MIGHT HAVE BEEN A MINOR ONE, IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE POLITICALLY DAMAGING. THE YOUNGER HUERTA COMMENTED THAT HE IS NOT ALLOWED ACCESS
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TO HIS UNCLE AND MUST NOW DEAL THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES. OTHER LIBERALS IN GUAYAQUIL TOLD POLCOUNS THAT THE ELDER HUERTA LIVES IN FEAR OF PANCHO. PANCHO MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE INTENDS NOT TO BE FROZEN OUT AND TO FIGHT ON BEHALF OF THE PARTY'S GUAYAQUIL DIRECTORATE. HE DENIES ANY PLAN TO UNDERMINE HIS UNCLE'S CANDIDACY, HOWEVER.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 3414

8. ASIDE FROM THE ELDER HUERTA'S PROBLEMS WITH HIS OWN

PARTY, HE APPEARS TO FACE A MORE SERIOUS ONE WITH THE ELECTORATE. IN FAIRLY SCIENTIFIC SAMPLINGS TAKEN IN QUITO AND GUAYAQUIL BY QUITO'S CHANNEL 2 JUST AFTER HIS CANDIDACY WAS ANNOUNCED, HUERTA SHOWED VERY POORLY. IN QUITO'S RESULTS HE RAN THIRD TO THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT'S BORJA (30 PERCENT) AND THE FNC'S SIXTO DURAN-BALLEN (25 PERCENT), RECEIVING ONLY 10 PERCENT. ABDON CLADERON, WHO NO ONE CREDITS WITH SERIOUS CHANCES, RECEIVED 6 PERCENT AND JAIME ROLDOS OF THE CFP SHOWED UP WITH A SURPRISINGLY LOW 5 PERCENT.

9. ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS OF THE GUAYAQUIL POLL ARE NOT YET PUBLIC, CHANNEL 2 COMMENTATOR DIEGO OQUENDO TOLD POLCOUNS MAY 19 THAT ROLDOS RAN FIRST, DURAN-BALLEN SECOND, AND HUERTA ONLY THIRD IN HIS OWN HOME BASE.

10. COMMENT: FROM AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY AND THE CHANNEL 2 POLLS IT APPEARS THAT HUERTA HAS FORMIDABLE TASKS IN UNITING HIS OWN PARTY BEHIND HIS CANDIDACY AND IN PICKING UP SOLID VOTER SUPPORT. RAUL CLEMENTE HUERTA, AS THE LIBERAL WAR HORSE OF THE 50'S AND 60'S MAY BE A HOUSEHOLD WORD FOR THOSE
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VOTERS OVER 40, BUT HE IS SIMPLY AN HISTORICAL FIGURE FOR THE GREAT MASS OF YOUNG VOTERS WHO HAVE NEVER VOTED OR WHO LAST VOTED IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN 1968. ALTHOUGH HUERTA DELIVERED HIS TELEVISED ADDRESS IN THE GRAND ORATORICAL STYLE OF THE PAST GENERATIONS, HIS OLD FASHIONED PLATFORM MANNER BETRAYED HIS 63 YEARS AND OFFERED NOTHING NEW IN THE POLITICAL EQUATION. THE POLLS CONFIRM THE GENERAL OPINION THAT DURAN-BALLEN LEADS THE PACK. HOWEVER, IT ALSO SHOWS THAT RAUL CLEMENTE HAS A BATTLE ON HIS HANDS TO RUN SECOND, WHICH HAS BEEN A CASUAL ASSUMPTION OF MANY OF THOSE WHO HAD PRESSED FOR HIS CANDIDACY.

11. DESPITE THESE OBSTACLES, HUERTA IS A WELL-KNOWN NAME WHICH STILL CARRIES A LOT OF WEIGHT WITH OLDER VOTERS. MOST IMPORTANT, HE IS LIKELY TO BE ABLE TO SPEND MORE THAN ANY OTHER CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE ELECTION AND FAR OUTPACE ROLDOS AND BORJA, HIS PUTATIVE RIVALS FOR THE RUN-OFF SPOT, IN PAID PUBLICITY. HE ALSO HAS THE SOLID BACKING OF THE NEWSPAPERS EL UNIVERSO AND EL TELEGRAFO IN GUAYAQUIL.
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